



# FOOD SAFETY FACTS FOR CONSUMERS

Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, U.S. Food and Drug Administration

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## Playing It Safe With Eggs

Fresh eggs may contain bacteria that can cause an intestinal infection called salmonellosis. Most healthy people recover from these infections within 4-7 days but they can lead to severe and even fatal illness, especially for those most vulnerable to foodborne disease—children, the elderly, and persons with immune systems weakened by health problems. You can avoid illness from eggs by knowing how to buy, store, handle and cook them—or foods that contain them—safely.

### **Buy Safe**

- **Buy eggs only if sold from a refrigerator or refrigerated case. Open the carton and make sure that the eggs are clean and the shells are not cracked.**
- **Store eggs in their original carton and refrigerate as soon as possible.**

### **Keep Clean and Don't Cross-contaminate**

- Wash hands, utensils, equipment, and work areas with hot, soapy water before and after they come in contact with eggs and egg-containing foods

### **Cook Thoroughly**

- **Cook eggs until both the yolk and the white are firm. Scrambled eggs should not be runny. Casseroles and other dishes containing eggs should be cooked to 160°F**
- If a recipe calls for eggs that are raw or undercooked when the dish is served, replace it with a recipe that contains only thoroughly cooked eggs.
- Serve cooked eggs and egg-containing foods immediately after cooking. For buffet-style serving, hot egg dishes should be kept hot, and cold egg dishes kept cold. Eggs and egg dishes, such as quiches or soufflés, may be refrigerated for serving later but should be thoroughly reheated to 165°F (74 C) before serving.

### **Refrigerate or Freeze for Safety's Sake**

- **Refrigerate raw shell eggs immediately after purchase and use them within 4 to 5 weeks.**
- Use hard-cooked eggs (in the shell or peeled) within 1 week after cooking.
- Cooked eggs, including hard-boiled eggs, and egg-containing foods should not sit out for more than 2 hours. Within 2 hours either reheat or refrigerate.
- Use frozen eggs within one year. Eggs should not be frozen in

their shells. To freeze whole eggs, beat yolks and whites together. Egg whites can also be frozen by themselves.

- Refrigerate leftover cooked egg dishes up to 3-4 days. When refrigerating a large amount of a hot egg-containing leftover divide it into several shallow containers so it will cool quickly.

### **Egg Safety Away From Home**

- Cooked eggs for a picnic should be packed in an insulated cooler with enough ice or frozen gel packs to keep them cold. Don't put the cooler in the trunk --carry it in the passenger compartment of the car. If taking cooked eggs to work or school, pack them with a small frozen gel pack or a frozen juice box.

### **Avoid Hidden Risks**

- Foods containing raw or lightly cooked eggs, such as Caesar salad, homemade ice cream or eggnog, hollandaise sauce, and French toast, can be dangerous, especially for people in the high-risk groups (young children, the elderly, and individuals with weakened immune systems). Many grocery stores carry pasteurized egg products but, since they include only egg whites, they may not work well in traditional recipes for egg-containing foods. Commercial forms of such foods are safe to serve if they are made with pasteurized liquid eggs.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HANDLING EGGS AND OTHER FOODS SAFELY, CALL TOLL-FREE**

#### **U.S. FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION**

**FOOD INFORMATION LINE**  
**1 (888) SAFEFOOD**  
24 hours a day

[<www.cfsan.fda.gov>](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov)

#### **U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**MEAT AND POULTRY HOTLINE**  
**1 (800) 535-4555**  
TTY: 1(800) 256-7072 (202) 720-3333  
in the Washington, DC area  
24 hours a day

#### **USDA's Food Safety Website**

[<www.fsis.usda.gov>](http://www.fsis.usda.gov)